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## VLAG in times of Corona: observations of a new director



When starting my position as scientific director of VLAG I had a good idea of what would be asked of me, and was very much looking forward to contributing to the well-being of PhD candidates, and their supervision teams. As a matter of fact, I have written a vision on how I would like to enhance and facilitate interactions, and also build a VLAG scientific community that makes use of everybody's strength. And then came Covid-19 which made safety and health our top priority.

What I note, and I cannot stress enough how much I appreciate this, is that many people join forces to keep things running. A huge amount of work has been done, and I feel that this is also a proud moment for many since it shows how resilient and inventive we can be. When staying close to VLAG; the office was immediately converted to a digital office to allow everyone to work safely. The amount of work that is done is tremendous.

There are a number of frequent questions that we get in relation to PhD courses that are cancelled and related lack of opportunity to meet the TSP requirements. At this very moment we cannot tell you what will happen, since this needs to be decided organization-wide. Please keep communicating your questions/concerns with us. That is what I feel is of the essence.

So it seems that content wise, we can keep things running, and testimony of this is also the fact that I get many draft papers of my PhD candidates who are very productive! I would also spend some time

to highlight the importance of social interactions in times of 'social distancing'; within the Food Process Engineering group, where I work, we have digital coffee breaks, and even a Spring-drink in honor of a PhD graduation next week. I feel that these social aspects will become more and more important if this situation persists, and I would like to encourage you all to organize these 'get-togethers' and look out for each other.

I hope that you all stay safe and healthy in these trying times, and this also holds for all people who are close to your hearts. If we look out for each other we can come out of this situation stronger than we were before, and that is what I wish for.

With kind regards,  
Karin

## Specific information for PhDs on COVID-19

### ***Intranet page for PhDs on corona related guidelines***

Become a member of the intranet group: <https://intranet.wur.nl/Project/PhDandcorona>

All updates regarding PhD research and corona are announced on the page attached to this [intranet group](#)

For the latest (general) updates and FAQs we would like to refer to the [WUR homepage](#)

For general questions regarding the WUR guidelines in relation to the corona outbreak, please email: [info.corona@wur.nl](mailto:info.corona@wur.nl)

## WUR PhD community Skype meetings

Two PhDs from Microbiology initiated a PhD community to share worries, coping mechanisms and most importantly help each other out, while making friends. This initiative has already been announced before the corona outbreak, but for the time being all meetings will be online. The idea is to make a group, or multiple groups online to talk about anything that may have happened since the university lockdown. The initiative is supported by two of the social workers of the university, Lyda Roseboom and Elsbeth Kuneman, who can also help out and give advice.

The goal is to let the PhD community start connecting and getting to know each other not only in our respective groups but throughout Wageningen University & Research.

A Skype channel is open every Friday from 3-4 PM, which can be found through this link:

<https://join.skype.com/KTKEVvAJAn1K>

## VLAG Office hours

You may have noticed the VLAG office is (mostly) working from home. We will keep, as much as possible, the same working hours during which we can be reached by phone, e-mail or skype meeting. Please, don't hesitate to contact us!

## Cancellations and postponements of VLAG courses

Due to the measures to combat the spread of the corona virus, all meetings and gatherings in the Netherlands have been suspended until at least 1 June 2020. We will keep the VLAG website updated! If courses are cancelled all participants will receive an email with the information on the cancellation. Courses that cannot take place on the dates as originally planned:

- 46th edition of the VLAG PhD Week – ~~6-9 April~~
- 2nd Postgraduate course Healthy Food Design – ~~27 April-1 May~~
- 16th Summer Course Glycosciences – ~~14-17 June~~
- 11th postgraduate course Reaction kinetics in food science – ~~6-11 July~~
- Introduction to R – ~~25-26 May~~

- Applied Statistics – ~~2-4 June~~
- Chemometrics (Multivariate Statistics – ~~10-12 June~~)

Information on new/rescheduled course dates will follow as soon as they are confirmed. Registered participants will receive this information by email. Others can find it on our website and in our mailing/newsletter.

## Guidelines for following online courses

Online course (discipline specific and general courses) are a great way to learn a new skill or gain new knowledge from your own home, especially now that regular courses are cancelled. Online courses are in some cases available for free, but in order to receive a certificate and claim credits or you might need to pay a course fee. To be able to complete the course for free and still be able to add the credits to your TSP the following guidelines apply:

- Courses need to be at postgraduate level (often communicated by the organizer of the course but in case this is not clear, your supervisor must state that this is the case)
- The number of ECTS depends on the study load (# study hours) and will be determined by VLAG based on the guidelines which can be found [here](#)
- VLAG needs an official certificate or an e-mail from your supervisor giving her/his approval and confirming that you have finished all parts of the course

You may also add Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) to your TSP, but these are considered MSc level and can only be added to the Optional Category (C) in your TSP. Please be aware that the maximum number of credits for MSc courses is 6 ECTS. It is also possible to add online courses in the category of General courses. Next to that, the same guidelines apply, as mentioned above, for other online courses.

## Wageningen Graduate Schools (WGS) courses ONLINE

Until August 1 - 2020 Wageningen Graduate Schools cannot offer physical courses. Most courses however will be offered online. Please check the [WGS website](#) for the most recent updates.

Courses that will continue online:

- Adobe InDesign
- Brain friendly working and writing
- Brain Training
- Career Assessment
- Career Development for Postdocs: Science and the Alternatives
- Career Orientation
- Career Perspectives
- Efficient Writing Strategies
- Project and Time Management
- Scientific Integrity
- Scientific Writing

### **New Dates available:**

Mobilising your - scientific - network (22 and 29 September)

This course provides you the essential tools to create a network through a variety of introductions, discussions and assignments.

## edX Remote Access Program available for free for everyone with an WUR account

Many edX partners joined forces and allow each other's student and staff to take their courses completely free of charge during the Corona outbreak. Wageningen embraced this initiative and therefor everybody with a WUR account can get full access to one of the many online courses from institutions like Cornell University, TU Delft, Harvard, MIT, RWTH Aachen University, Tecnológico de Monterrey, and many more.

It doesn't matter if you want to develop your personal or professional skills or gain knowledge on a specific theme or discipline, there is always a course that fits your interest. Just remember to enrol and use your code **before 1 May 2020**. Once you activated your code you will have full access to the course. You don't have to finish the course by that date, just enrol and use the coupon code for full access. Within your course environment you find deadlines for each specific course.

Read everything about this initiative and how to join [online](#).

## Upcoming events

### **BCF Career Event**

Date: 30 September 2020

Venue: Beatrix building, Jaarbeurs Utrecht

Registration fee: free of charge [online](#)

Online registration deadline: 6 May 2020

BCF Career Event is the largest career event for the Life Sciences in the Netherlands. It is the meeting place for everyone who is or wants to be active in Bio/Life Sciences, Chemistry, Food or Pharma.

BCF Career Event offers participants the opportunity to get into direct contact with a broad range of employers in the sector, but also with other organisations that can help them further in their career.